



*Division of Vocational
Rehabilitation*

DVR Secondary School Transition Program Frequently Asked Questions June 2016

1. What is the secondary school transition program?

DVR's Secondary School Transition Program involves planned activities designed to provide students and youth with training, education, experience and support that helps them become competitively employed in community integrated settings. These activities are carefully coordinated with schools in order to make certain school and VR goals are compatible and scaffolded.

Scaffolding is defined by The Great Schools Partnership as:

*In education, **scaffolding** refers to a variety of instructional techniques used to move students progressively toward stronger understanding and, ultimately, greater independence in the learning process. The term itself offers the relevant descriptive metaphor: teachers provide successive levels of temporary support that help students reach higher levels of comprehension and skill acquisition that they would not be able to achieve without assistance. Like physical scaffolding, the supportive strategies are incrementally removed when they are no longer needed, and the teacher gradually shifts more responsibility over the learning process to the student.*

...(S)caffolding is often used to bridge learning gaps—i.e., the difference between what students have learned and what they are expected to know and be able to do at a certain point in their education.

One of the main goals of scaffolding is to reduce the negative emotions and self-perceptions that students may experience when they get frustrated, intimidated, or discouraged when attempting a difficult task without the assistance, direction, or understanding they need to complete it.

With this principle in mind, the goal of DVR is to make sure school activities and goals are coordinated in strategic and intentional ways in order for students to experience success.

2. Is there a DVR PETS Program?

No. Pre-employment Transition Services are activities in five focus areas that DVR may use as part of the Secondary Transition Program.

3. What are pre-employment transition services?

Significant changes in the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 2014 now provide vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies across the nation with the opportunity to provide **expanded secondary transition program services** in five specific focus areas to students with Individualized Education Programs (IEP) or 504 plans, whether or not they have applied or been found eligible for DVR services.

These services can be provided to groups of students who are eligible or potentially eligible for DVR services, and also to students with higher needs who have open cases with DVR. Individualized services are carefully planned in coordination with a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP). The services can be provided to students starting around age 16, if they have school-based IEP or 504 plans.

The five pre-employment transition services focus areas include:

- Job exploration
- Work-based learning experiences
- Exploring opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive or post-secondary educational programs
- Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living
- Instruction in self-advocacy, which may include peer mentoring.

4. What is the purpose of pre-employment transition services?

The Rehabilitation Act describes the purpose of pre-employment transition services as providing an 'early start' at job exploration for students with disabilities **as part of the Secondary School Transition Program**.

The 2014 WIOA and the Rehabilitation Act Amendments place a heightened emphasis on the provision of secondary transition services to students with disabilities to ensure they have meaningful opportunities to receive the training and other supports they need to achieve meaningful employment outcomes after they leave high school.

5. Who can receive pre-employment transition services?

Pre-employment transition services are intended for secondary school students with disabilities **as part of the DVR Secondary School Transition Program**.

Students with disabilities are defined as 1) students in an IEP or 504 plan, and 2) still in school district services.

6. How do students receive pre-employment transition services?

Pre-employment transition services can be provided in a variety of ways:

1. Group activities: The best **first step** for students interested in pre-employment transition services is to participate in general pre-employment transition services group activities. These activities will be provided by DVR staff and other partners.

Group services are still in development. Stay tuned for updates on group pre-employment transition services available in your area beginning in Summer and Fall 2016.

2. Individual activities: If, after participating in group services, students and their families feel the student needs additional and individualized secondary transition services, they would talk with the DVR counselor assigned to their school for more information about individualized services.

DVR can provide these individual services to DVR-eligible students in collaboration with the school and the student's transition program. These are individualized based on student goals and what services are available from the student's school.

7. What kind of a disability must a student have to participate in the DVR Secondary School Transition Program?

Students who experience a range of disabilities may be a part of the secondary transition program. To receive individual services, they must apply for and be found eligible for DVR as part of the regular DVR application/eligibility process.

To receive services in one or more of the pre-employment transition service focus areas, they must have an IEP or 504 plan and be attending secondary school. Some of these focus areas may be provided to students in groups or as part of a DVR Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

8. Does a young person have to be in secondary school to receive pre-employment transition services?

Yes. A student must be enrolled in school district services to be engaged in pre-employment transition services.

9. Why are pre-employment transition services just beginning? Where did they originate from?

First, it is important to understand why there have been changes. Public Vocational Rehabilitation programs nationally are funded federally through the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. VR programs also receive about one state dollar for every four federal dollars. Every so often that law is changed/improved or amended.

About a decade ago the Rehabilitation Act was rolled into the larger Workforce Act, then referred to as the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). As of the recent 2014 amendments, the law is now referred to as the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The Rehabilitation Act was reauthorized with WIOA as Title IV of WIOA.

10. Does DVR have special grant funding for pre-employment transition services?

There is no additional funding provided to DVR for pre-employment transition services. Funding for pre-employment transition services comes from 15% of DVR's annual federal budget. While the law does now expect VR agencies nationwide to spend 15% of their existing resources on pre-employment transition services students with disabilities - **these changes did not come with additional funding.**

11. Do pre-employment transition services replace what secondary schools are doing with students?

Schools are responsible to provide secondary transition services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Pre-employment transition services are not intended to replace school educational or fiscal responsibilities under IDEA or 504. They are intended to be **coordinated** with educational services. Schools and DVR are both required to contribute time, funding, and expertise to students with disabilities for secondary transition services.

12. Can a student still in high school get a job through pre-employment transition services?

Pre-employment transition services are **pre**-vocational services provided **as part of the DVR Secondary Transition Program**. They are not intended for job placement. **They are intended to prepare students for competitive, integrated employment in the community after they leave high school.**

DVR is still focused on post-secondary (i.e. after school district services) employment outcomes. DVR's expectation is that students receiving individual DVR services with pre-employment transition activities will continue to work with their DVR counselors to develop specific employment goals for post-high school life.

To emphasize: Students who have open cases with DVR who are receiving secondary transition services as part of their Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) should move to a more-focused employment goal after they leave high school.

13. How is DVR allocating 15% of its budget for pre-employment transition services?

For group-based activities: DVR has several partners as we begin to envision how to make pre-employment transition services available to students with disabilities. The most effective way to provide these services will be to groups of students, in coordination with school and community partners.

Along with school coordination, the Rehabilitation Act mandates VR to partner with workforce development boards, one-stop centers, and employers to develop work-based learning opportunities for students with disabilities.

Some current DVR partnerships include:

- **The Center for Change in Transition Services (CCTS)**

CCTS is working with DVR to develop statewide interagency transition networks that will provide resources and technical assistance to DVR and schools. CCTS is also helping Educational Service Districts and school districts assess their current transition practices so DVR is able to partner with school transition programs in a way that enhances rather than replaces school activities. CCTS is in the

process of developing pilot transition programs statewide that will begin in Fall 2016 to enhance transition by providing evidence-based interventions for successful transition for students with disabilities.

- **Educational Service Districts (ESDs)**

The nine ESDs in Washington State will receive DVR funding for group-based pre-employment transition services beginning in Fall 2016. These services will be based on ESD proposals that illustrate employment-focused transition needs in each area based on ESD school districts assessments administered through CCTS.

- **Workforce Development Councils (WDCs)**

DVR is contracting with WDCs throughout the state to provide summer work-readiness and work-based learning experiences beginning in Summer 2016.

For individual activities: The Rehabilitation Act describes **individual** transition services this way: *If a student with a disability requires services that are beyond the limited scope of pre-employment transition services, the student would have to apply for and be determined eligible for VR services and develop an individualized plan for the receipt of these services as would be true for any other applicant.*

Because most students with IEP or 504 plans will not require intensive services from DVR, the number of students who would apply for DVR services **as part of the Secondary School Transition Program** will be much smaller than those engaged in group-based services. For those that do apply and are found eligible, services will be planned in coordination with the student's school transition program. If DVR finds that additional services are needed for an individual student, DVR may work with the student to contract with local community rehabilitation programs to provide these services.

I have more questions. Who do I contact?

If you have more questions about the changes to the law and the DVR Secondary Transition Program, contact:

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You may also contact the DVR supervisor in your area. The best way to locate DVR office supervisors is here:

<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/RA/dvr/find-an-office>